CATALOGUES OF ART EXHIBITIONS ORGANIZED BY THE ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN REPUBLISHED ON MICROFICHE

Published on microfiche by:

Chadwyck-Healey Ltd
45 South Street
Bishops Stortford
Herts CM23 3AG
England

Somerset House
417 Maitland Avenue
Teaneck
New Jersey 07666
USA

Date of publication and production of master: 1975

Series: The purpose of this series is to make available those catalogues that have lasting interest through their text or their illustrations. Catalogues and cumulations of titles in the series are available from the publishers

Serial numbers: Each title is given a seven-figure serial number in the top right hand corner of the microfiche title strip. This is an accession number. The first figure indicates the number of the list in which the title first appears; the first three-figure group signifies the gallery or museum; the second three-figure group the accession number for that title.

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Technical data:

Producing laboratory: Micromedia Ltd, Kidlington, Oxford.

pop prints

An Arts Council exhibition
sponsored by 'Personna'

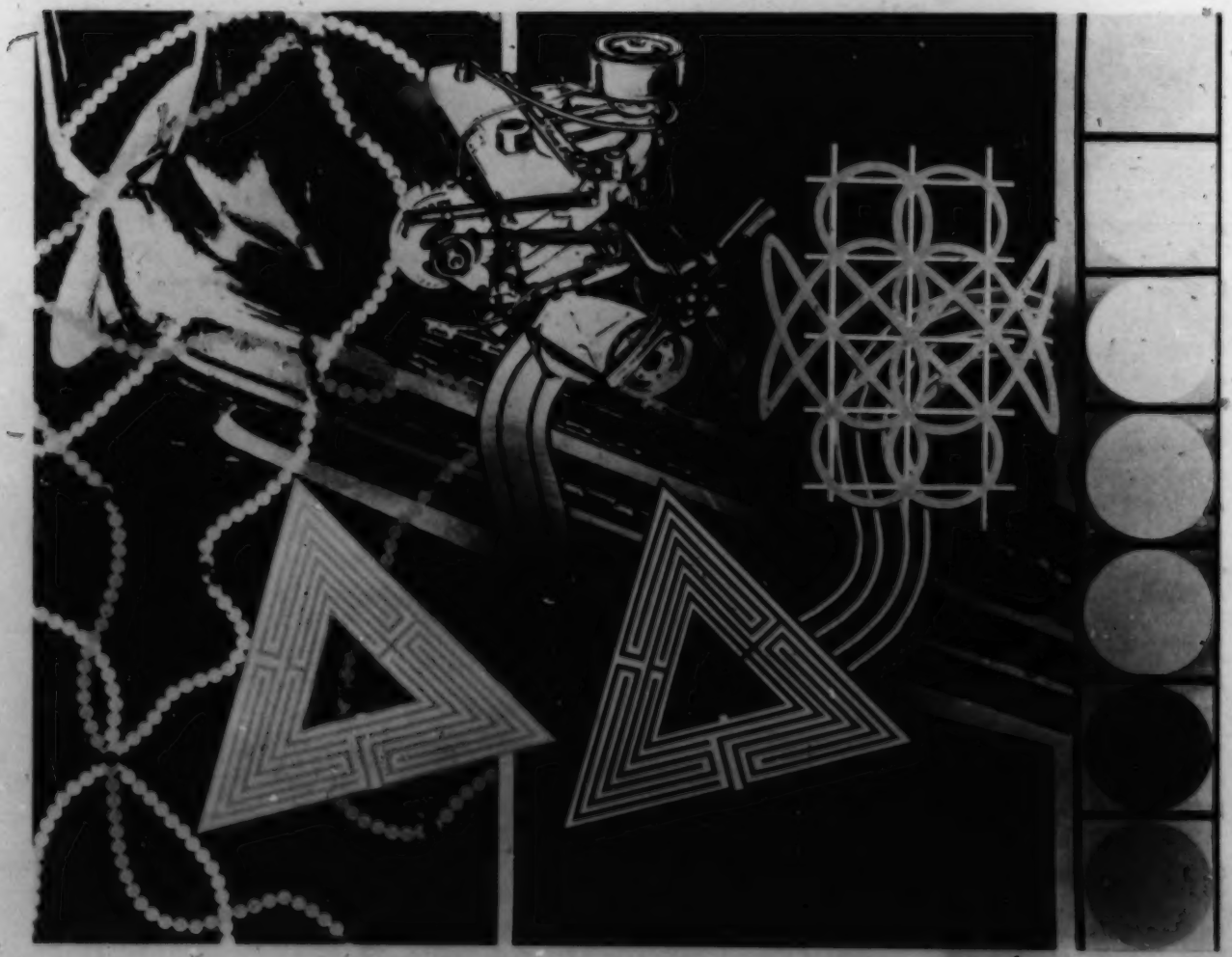
Foreword

During the past two years the Arts Council has on many occasions shown the work of British Pop artists. This is our first exhibition of both British and American Pop; of the eleven artists represented eight are from the United States and three from this country.

We are grateful to Mr Charles H. Wilson, Managing Director of Ever-Ready Personna, for lending us these silk-screen prints, which were specially commissioned by his company, and for allowing us to extend the tour of the exhibition a further nine months. We are also indebted to Mr Taube and Mr Shepherd of Brook-Hart, Ruder and Finn International for their help and advice as public relations consultants to Personna.

The exhibition opened originally at the Chelsea School of Art in April 1966 and has already visited ten places.

Gabriel White
Director of Art, Arts Council of Great Britain
March 1967



Pop Prints by Max Kozloff

For all its notoriety, Pop art has never been a well-understood style. But the confusion with which it is still received, after four years, proves how lively, and even unsettling, an art it is. This exhibition of original Pop prints sponsored by Personna, reflects the excitement of a phenomenon that has become one of the most searching in the visual arts.

Yet, Pop art so far has only taken root in those societies which have an enormous commercial sub-culture. Largely, this has meant England and North America. For a generation of artists whose childhood dates to the 1930s, the allure of popular imagery—signs, illustrations, ads, movies—became simply a natural element of their consciousness. They were gifted with the ability to keep approaching these things spontaneously while their serious ambitions as artists matured. It was in London, in 1952, that the popular media were first discussed from the point of view of their aesthetic implications. One of the participants recalls that in his adolescence his only contact with the outer world was the monthly appearance of Mechanix Illustrated! It would not be too far-fetched to see Peter Phillips's 'Custom Print' silk-screens on bright silver foil as a recollection of such a contact. Here is a montage of elated feelings for the internal combustion engine. A fascination for twentieth-century technology has never been absent from modern art, but rarely has it infused a mechanical medium with such unrestrained nostalgia.

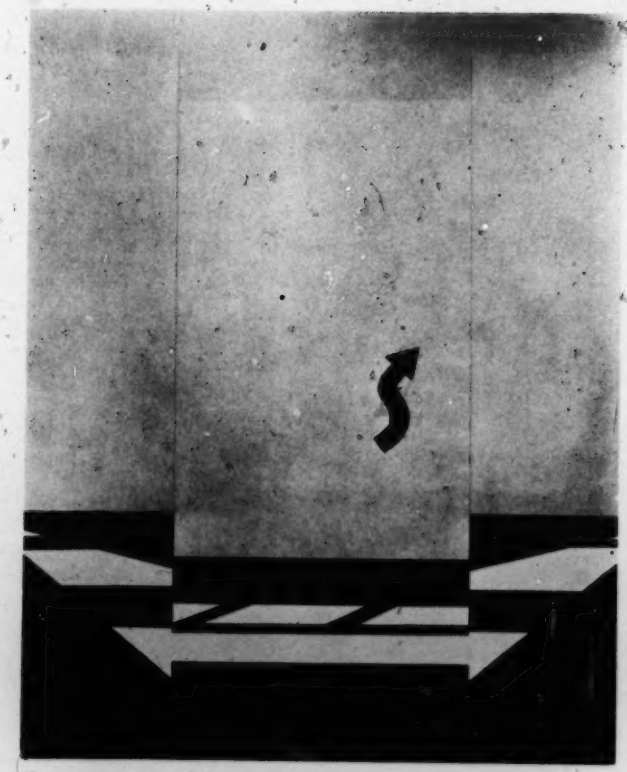
As for the origins of Pop art in the United States, that is a country in which the folk-tradition more than anywhere else identifies itself with the commercial environment. Stuart Davis, to name only one of the best-known older American painters, developed a very colloquial style based on the jumping rhythms of the industrial landscape. And Edward Hopper still interweaves the openness and rootlessness of the country with the compression and geometry of the city. Perhaps Allan d'Arcangelo's highway signs and markings owe something to both these earlier men. What remains true is that on one hand there has always been in American visual art, a hard-core, unsensuous factual tradition, and on the other, a natural imbibing of an atmosphere that bemuses and cajoles the spectator with ever more inflated sensations. Such is the indigenous raw material of Pop art.

Like the flat, sharp-edged abstract painting that one now sees spread through many countries, Pop art is a reaction against the painterly excesses of Abstract Expressionism, the style that once dominated the post-war world. In fact, it is easy to see a disciplined and invigorating structure in Lichtenstein and Rosenquist, while Laing's motifs overly move to abstraction. But the ambition animating Pop art is not merely that of accommodating forms to images but, in the process of fusing the two, to change our view of the world.

Paul Gauguin once said that 'the ugly can sometimes be beautiful, the pretty never!' Encountering this exhibition, one may begin to see this as the challenge to artists for whom nothing could be more provocative than to rehabilitate the 'pretty'. Pop is an ironic art, because it seemingly mimes the content of its sources, while operating on other levels. And if the 'pretty' is a sentimental and vicarious attempt at beauty, the artist, by displacing and anaesthetizing it, can miraculously make us look at the thing itself. This detachment of the Pop artists has been perhaps the aspect of their work most difficult for the public to accept. Rather than transmitting messages, they are re-establishing an aesthetic intimacy by transforming commercial ends into artistic means. Commercial imagery becomes a new form of nature.

For all that, it can be seen that these works do not belong to any particular category. They are not flagrantly abstract or representational, but somewhere in between. The important consideration is that subject matter and techniques are juggled with each other in ever more fascinating complexity. Images are subdivided, repeated, distended, coarsened, so that we become infinitely more alert to how we receive impulses from the communications media. In a sense, the packaging of information becomes the content not the 'information' itself. And as a result, it is possible to see an erotic latency in laminated metallic plastic, or a poetic dematerialization of substance in the blown-up rotogravure dots of a transferred black and white photograph. The silk-screen medium permits exactly this kind of flexibility. Not only can photographs and signs be transferred on silk screen, but they in turn can be collaged or printed on an astonishing variety of surfaces and materials. Silk-screen will accept any colouristic or textural personality the artist wants to give it and is in one respect, then, a hybridization of all visual media, while yet remaining an original graphic process in itself.

Whether optically brilliant or subtle, these works surprise by their recombinations of what was always thought familiar and banal. They startle the senses with their implausible glamour, and their effervescent seriousness.



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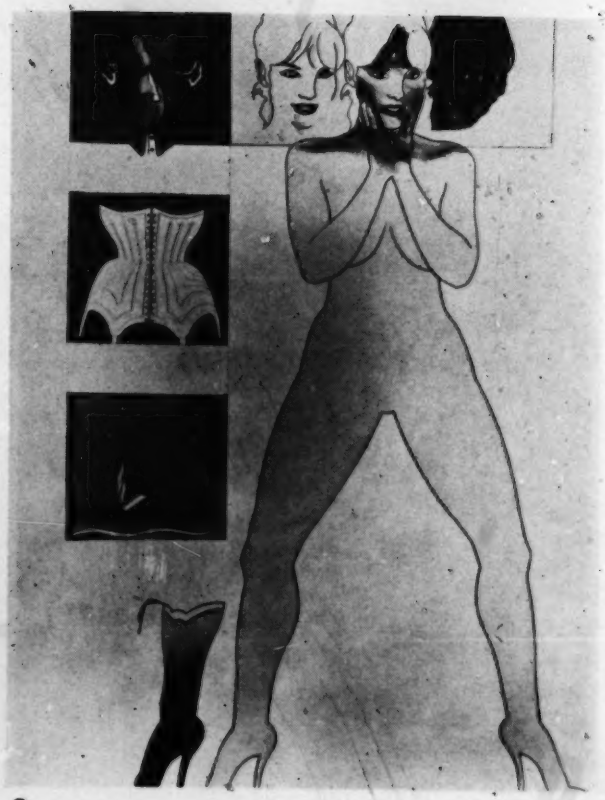

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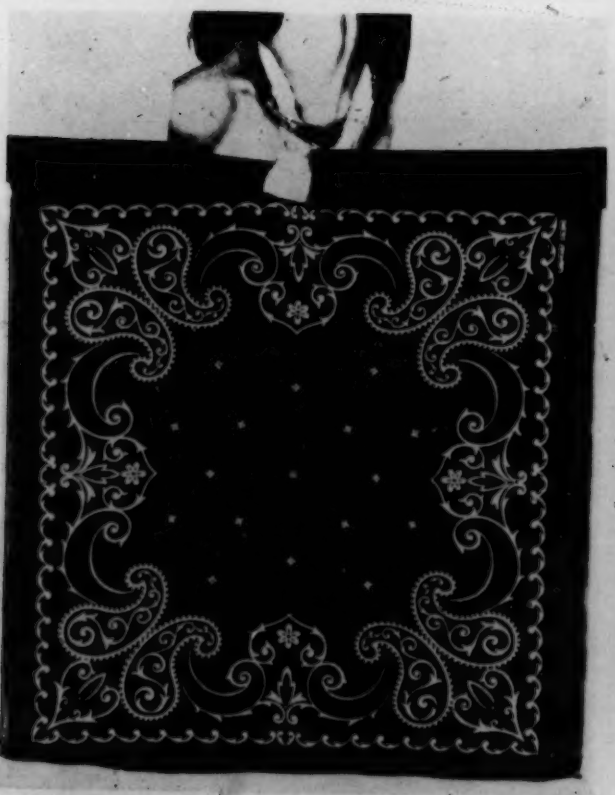

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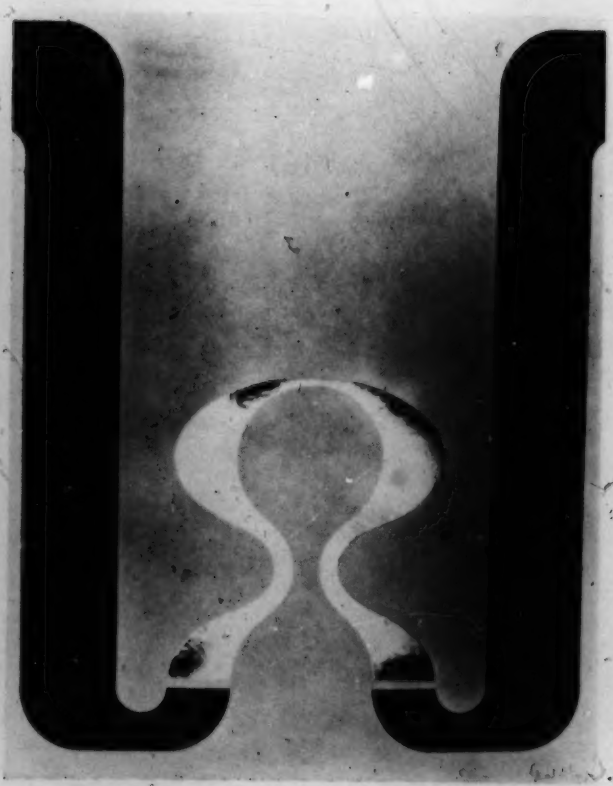


Allan d'Arcangelo

1 Landscape No. 1
silk-screen 24 x 20

2 Landscape No. 2
silk-screen on vinyl 30 x 24

3 Landscape No. 3
silk-screen 40 x 30

Jim Dine

4 Awl
silk-screen 24 x 20

5 Throat
silk-screen 30 x 24

6 Calico
silk-screen 40 x 30

Allen Jones

7 Miss America
lithograph 24 x 20

8 Pour les Levres
silk-screen 30 x 24

9 Janet is wearing . . .
lithograph 24 x 20

Gerald Laing

10 Compact
collage and silk-screen 24 x 20

11 Slide
collage and silk-screen on styrene 30 x 24

12 Triple
silk-screen 30 x 36

Roy Lichtenstein

13 Moonscape
silk-screen on metallic plastic 20 x 24

14 Reverie
silk-screen 30 x 24

15 Sweet Dreams, Baby!
silk-screen 40 x 30

Peter Phillips

16 Custom Print No. 1
silk-screen on bright silver foil 24 x 20

17 Custom Print No. 2
silk-screen on bright silver foil 24 x 30

18 Custom Print No. 3
silk-screen on bright silver foil 24½ x 40

Mel Ramos

19 Chic
silk-screen 24 x 20

20 Tobacco Rose
silk-screen 30 x 24

21 Miss Comfort Cream
silk-screen 40 x 30

James Rosenquist

22 Circles of Confusion
silk-screen 24 x 20

23 Whipped Butter for Eugen Ruchin
silk-screen 30 x 24

24 For Love
silk-screen 35¼ x 26¾

Andy Warhol

25 Jacqueline Kennedy No. 1
silk-screen 24 x 20

26 Jacqueline Kennedy No. 2
silk-screen 24 x 30

27 Jacqueline Kennedy No. 3
silk-screen 40 x 30

John Wesley

28 Maiden
silk-screen 24 x 20

29 Bird Lady
silk-screen 24 x 30

30 Dream of Unicorns
silk-screen 28 x 38½

Tom Wesselmann

31 Cut-out Nude
silk-screen on blow-formed vinyl 20 x 24

32 Nude
silk-screen 24 x 30

33 TV Still-life
silk-screen 30 x 40

Max Kozloff is a prominent art critic working currently in the United States. In addition to his regular articles in The Nation, *of which he is art editor, and* Artforum, *of which he is New York editor, he has been a frequent contributor to numerous other distinguished publications. He is currently finishing a book on Jaspar Johns which is scheduled for publication this year.*

Corporate statement

We live in a day when an increasing number of people are seeing a direct relationship between their own lives and thoughts and those of the artist. The fact that more people visit museums than attend football matches no longer is astounding. What is significant is that a high percentage of these museum-goers are also the same people who go to the stadiums. Art has become an important part of our environment.

As part of an international corporation, we at Personna are proud to contribute to the communication of a significant element of culture. We are, indeed, enthusiastic about this Pop art exhibition, which draws together strong and vital works by some of today's best-known artists. If it is accurate to say that communications have come of age, then it is also true that the international corporation has also come of age.

An important factor in this coming of age is a willingness on the part of business to use its unique resources and channels of communication to bring key elements in the world's culture to all sections of the public. We believe that it is our obligation to represent not only that which is tested and traditional in our society, but also that which is new and experimental in art as well as our products.

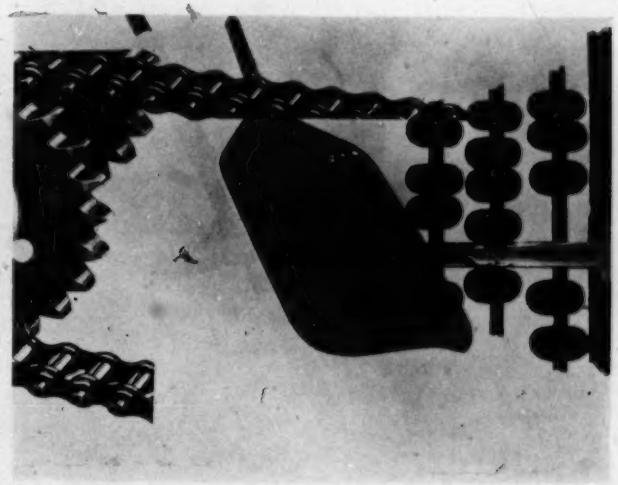
A business journal reported recently: '. . . the dynamism of business depends primarily upon innovation—the developing of new products, the opening of new markets, the advancing of new designs are all part of the innovative process for the businessman. And it requires no stretch of the imagination to realize that the artist proceeds along similar lines, though in different ways, since he too innovates with new forms, new materials, new structure and new blendings.'

For us at Personna, there are additional reasons for our participation in this exhibition. We are businessmen, not artists, but as manufacturers of mass consumer products, we are intrigued by art forms which cut across intellectual and cultural barriers, appealing to people of every type and from every place. Too, we know that concepts expressed in new forms of design and imagery are essential to the continued health of our own company, for we heavily rely on exploratory art forms to provide the basis for applied commercial design.

'Pop prints' will also be on public view in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Guatemala, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Puerto Rico, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, USA, Venezuela, Yugoslavia and other countries.

To quote from the business journal once more, 'The arts—perhaps more than any other manifestation of the social order—reflect the present state of norms, tensions and tendencies in our culture. . . . The cherishing of artistic creativeness contributes to a deeper and more comprehensive view of human life and strengthens the concept of a plural society in which individual ideas and freedoms are themselves cherished.'

Charles H. Wilson
Managing Director, Ever-Ready Personna



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